

Transfiguration of Our Lord
Russian Orthodox Church
~~Egigik~~
Alaska

HABS No. AK-78

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

HABS No. AK-78

Location: Egegik, mouth of Egegik River on Bristol Bay, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: Transfiguration of Our Lord Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: A number of historic Russian Orthodox churches survive in Alaska, built by Native congregations in traditional forms. Although an expedient material -- plywood -- covers the walls, the church at Egegik is in a traditional Russian Orthodox form, with sanctuary and nave separated by the iconostas, and a belltower on the west front.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The church was built ca. 1925-30, and moved to its present site ca. 1956-58. It appears to have been largely rebuilt at that time.
2. Architect, builder: Migley Kelly, according to Phil Kelly.
3. Original plans and construction: The church appears to have been built as one block, incorporating the nave and sanctuary under the gable roof. It is unlikely that plywood was its original siding.
4. Alterations and additions: The church was moved back from the edge of the bluff ca. 1956-58.

B. Previous Churches on the Site:

In 1904 the church identified "left bank, mouth of Igagik River" as the site of church property, indicating that a church was located here. (Alaskan Russian Church Archives, reel 214.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Nave and sanctuary are incorporated into the gable-roofed main block. A square belltower rises from the roof of the narthex.

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2. Condition of fabric: fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The nave and sanctuary, contained in one block, is three bays long. At the west end is the narthex, of smaller dimensions.
2. Foundations: Wood post.
3. Walls: Plywood, painted white.
4. Structural system: Wood frame.
5. Stoop: Plank stoop.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There is a single door with five horizontal panels.
 - b. Windows: The windows have six-light fixed sash.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is covered with wood shingles. There are two crosses on the ridge.
 - b. Belltower: Rising from the gable roof of the narthex is a square belltower. Atop its pyramidal roof is a smaller belfry, with round-arched openings and a steep pyramidal roof. It is crowned by a cross.

C. Description of Interior (Note: Interior was not accessible, but was observed through windows):

1. Floor plans: The nave is one open space, separated from the sanctuary on the east by the iconostas. The narthex is on the west.
2. Stairways: There is a two-step amvon.
3. Flooring: The floors are covered with plywood, and some carpeting.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and tray ceiling of the nave are covered with plywood. The sanctuary has a wainscot of narrow beaded boards, laid horizontally on the walls above.
5. Doorways: There are new double doors between the nave and narthex.

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6. Decorative features: The iconostas is constructed of cotton, stretched on a frame and painted light green. The balusters of the krilos are turned, with portions painted red.

D. Site:

The church faces west, with the altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches. The church is located in the middle of town. Its cemetery is located south, across a gully, nearer the Baptist church than this one.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Alaskan Russian Church Archives, reel 214, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Kelly, Phil, Egegik resident, interviewed by author June 1, 1990.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.